

Section III

Vision Statement

Overview

The vision statement establishes the overarching context for development of the master plan and the basis for planning decisions related to ecological stewardship, cultural stewardship, development, and educational programming.

Dakota County Parks Mission Statement

Spring Lake Park Reserve is part of the Dakota County regional and county park system, which is defined in the Dakota County Park System Plan. Within that plan, the vision and mission of Dakota County Parks is stated, as reiterated below.

Vision Statement for Dakota County Parks:

“The vision for parks and open spaces in Dakota County is a system of parks, park reserves, and trails that protect and preserve important natural, historic, and/or cultural areas and landscapes; provide opportunities for the recreational enjoyment and education of the public; and complement the opportunities offered by other education and recreation providers.”

The Dakota County Parks Mission Statement:

“To enrich lives by providing high quality recreation and education opportunities in harmony with natural resource preservation and stewardship.”

The vision and goals for Spring Lake Park Reserve are consistent with and supportive of Dakota County’s broader vision and mission.

Vision and Goal Statement

The vision for Spring Lake Park Reserve that emerged through the planning process is to:

“Create a park reserve that focuses on preserving the ecological and cultural integrity of the land while providing appropriate recreational and educational opportunities.”

The overarching goal in support of this vision is to develop a plan that:

- ▶ Addresses Spring Lake Park as a “Reserve” with a maximum development/facility footprint of 20% of the park’s land area.
- ▶ Has popular support.
- ▶ Balances generalized use with specialized use.
- ▶ Balances ecological, cultural resource protection with recreation and education.
- ▶ Maximizes educational opportunities and tells the story of the park’s cultural and ecological history.

- ▶ Has a regional focus and appeal to attract visitors from beyond the immediate local area.
- ▶ Reflects the original purpose of siting the park on the Mississippi River and reinforces a unique theme based on the river's resources and local cultural history.
- ▶ Celebrates the park's river context in terms of regional, state, and federal riverway designations.
- ▶ Evaluates existing and future uses from a regional service perspective and is in harmony with providing natural resource based experiences.
- ▶ Is practical and can be implemented, and identifies priorities and strategies for implementation.
- ▶ Considers innovative approaches to combine recreational and educational activities with resource preservation and protection.

The master plan is successful in adhering to this vision and achieving the stated goals.

Themes and Sub-Themes

In support of the vision statement, a number of themes were identified for Spring Lake Park Reserve to help guide the development of the master plan.

Overarching Theme:

Spring Lake Park Reserve encompasses an unusual variety of landscapes, topography, ecosystems, and cultural settlement patterns. Variety itself is a defining characteristic of the park, although the view from any one vantage point might not give many clues about the diversity beyond. The "hidden" nature of landscapes such as the Big Ravine, caves, western springs, and seepage meadow invites movement through the park in a process of discovery. The park's long, linear shape contributes to this sequence of discoveries and at the same time conforms to and follows the unifying feature that has always drawn people to the park area – the Mississippi River. The unique history of the Spring Lake area also reinforces the notion of "hidden" aspects, including prehistoric settlements, the ghost town of Nininger, and submergence of floodplain and Spring Lake itself by the building of Lock and Dam #2. The overarching theme developed for the Spring Lake Master Plan is:

"Discover the hidden Mississippi River Treasures — preserve/protect/share the experience."

Within this overarching theme, the plan also builds on the following sub-themes:

The Mississippi River:

- ▶ Experienced close up and as a vista
- ▶ World's third largest river
- ▶ North American flyway for migratory birds
- ▶ Scenic gateway to "Bluff Country"
- ▶ A "working" river, commercial uses
- ▶ Changes related to Lock and Dam No. 2

Ecological History:

- ▶ Plant community diversity over time
- ▶ Stewardship and preservation
- ▶ Habitat connectivity
- ▶ Historic "working" landscapes - agriculture, quarrying

Landforms and Features:

- ▶ Bluffs and bedrock cliffs
- ▶ Islands and shallow lake
- ▶ Ravines
- ▶ River terraces and shoreline
- ▶ Spring-fed streams and wetlands

Cultural History:

- ▶ Interpreting the past, present, and future
- ▶ Prehistoric habitation
- ▶ European settlement
- ▶ Interrelationship of habitation and natural resources

Recreational Uses:

- ▶ Hunting and fishing as longstanding traditions
- ▶ Observing wildlife
- ▶ Unique recreational opportunities
- ▶ Outdoor educational opportunities
- ▶ Quiet contemplative spaces
- ▶ Connectivity between uses.

Care has been taken to weave these themes into the fabric of the master plan.